1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32

Bison Horn Maria

294 reveal their true colour and beauty; they were then rubbed smooth with sand and polished with mustard oil. The edges of the horns where they had originally sprung on their cores from the bison's head were cut down and trimmed clean and straight, so that they would fit closely on to the sides of the basketry cap, a little to the front of and above the ears. Holes were bored at regular intervals about an inch from the rim of the horns with a piece of heated brass wire, and widened with the point of a knife used as a drill by rolling the wooden handle between the palms of the hands. Palm [283] fibre twine[1] was stitched through these holes and the basketry, the end of the twine being then whipped three or four times round the end of the horn, passed through the basketry again and knotted inside the cap to the other end. Meanwhile the peacock's tail-feathers had had all their lower feathering trimmed off and had been gathered into a tight round bunch of the eyed ends, all round and below which were added great numbers of the tail-feathers of the red jungle-cock or his domesticated cousin. The stalks were then plaited together with horizontal twilled wefts of thin slices of green bamboo rind, the ends being cut flush, and bound round twice with bamboo rind. The plume so made was fastened vertically to the peak of the basketry cap by a bamboo rod passing through the peak and running into the bunched feather stems, and by stitches of twine. The further adornment of the *tallagulla* depends largely on means and taste. The stem of the plume of feathers is wound round with coloured cloth, the ends of which hang as streamers down to the centre of the back. *Pagri* cloth of bright colours is criss-crossed tightly over the basketry cap and the brow ends of the horns, and often ends of this are left as streamers behind the head. Ideally, a brow piece of red or blue cloth, with a fringe, single or double, of closely-stitched cowries along its lower edge, and from five to ten tassels of strings of cowries hanging from it over the face, is tied over the lower rim of the head-dress; the brow piece is often further adorned in the centre or edges with flakes of mica, or groups of cowries, or brass studs, or a pattern of small pieces of cloth of contrasting colours. Now cowries being unobtainable, often this brow-piece is replaced by extra folds of *pagri* cloth.

●136 Bison must in the old days have been very plentiful; this was, indeed, recorded as the case by Glasfurd in 1862, but his son Colonel A. I. R. Glasfurd, in the fascinating chapter on a shoot in Bastar in his *Musings of an Old Shikari*,[2] states that he took his father's old diaries with him to Bastar and found no game at all in

[1] 'Twine' is used in its technical sense.
[2] pp. 127-48 (London, The Bodley Head, 1928).
[See cat. 116, p. 449. – Analyst]

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

many of the places where game of all kinds was plentiful in his father's time. Every Maria has his bow and arrow, the population has multiplied, and miles of jungle have been beaten annually for game in the great spring hunts. Wild buffalo and bison had been so reduced in numbers that they were declared protected thirty years ago, and heavy fines have been imposed for shooting them. The supply of bison-horns is thus not equal to the demand, and the head-dress is therefore a highly prized hereditary possession. No one should try to buy them from their owners; if a specimen is needed, the collector should provide the horns and other materials and see it made up for him. Bison-horns being now rare, and obtainable only from a bison found dead or by purchase from the State Forest Department, various substitutes are being used, such as domestic bullocks' or small buffaloes' horns, wild boars' tushes, the long beaks of the hornbill, and, occasionally, the antlers of the spotted deer (*Cervus axis*). The most interesting substitutes are brass patterned horns, of the shape and size of bison-horns, made by the *cire-perdue* process by the local Gharwa (Ghasia) brass workers.

Except occasional dancing anklets of hollow iron with pebbles inside, the Bison-horn Maria wears no special dancing dress; in fact he girds up his loin-cloth higher than usual and generally discards his singlet or '*waskat*', so as to leave himself as free as possible for his antics, while the heavy drum that he carries slung from his right shoulder across his abdomen necessitates as much freedom as possible.

The women wear no special dancing dress, but put on every available ornament, and carry in their right hands *tirdudi* or bamboo staves to which are fastened bunches of iron pellet-bells, shaped something like short but plump pea-pods, which they clash in time with the drums as they dance by striking their butts on the ground. Similar bells sometimes adorn the drum-stick with which the left hand of the male dancer beats the cowskin membrane at the left end of his drum.

Weapons and tools

The universal *vade mecum* of the Hill Marias is the knife or *hasyaq* carried tucked into the loin-cloth, with or without a wooden sheath. Of this, as of all weapons and tools used by Hill or Bison-horn Marias, it has to be remembered that they are not always made by blacksmiths working exclusively for Marias, but often by blacksmiths in or near the bazaar villages of the plains who cater for Murias, Halbas and other tribes also. The most distinctive types are possibly, in the case of the Hill Marias, those made by the few blacksmiths living in their hills; but there are only slight differences, often of mere

[see cat. 116 p. 419]